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Lessons to Be Learned

THE disastrous failure of the Cuban invasion, an event now just over two months old, will probably rank as one of the most dismal flops in American military history. It is now known that this highly secret operation, conceived under one administration and carried out under another, was incapable of success from the start. Since the fiasco, there has been much discussion of "why" the invasion failed. Some have argued that with substantial American air support, the landing might have been more successful. Others, and our view would appear to be the more accurate one, have pointed out that it was completely impossible for a force of only a few hundred men to topple a well-entrenched communist regime, no matter what assault preparations may have been made.

This brings up the really key question. If America is to profit from this sobering episode, it would be hoped that a full explanation can be evolved as to why and how the decision could have been made to launch this adventurous assault when its actual chances for success were so remote. The issue is not so much "why" the Cuban invasion failed as it is "how" the order could have been given to go ahead with such a risky project.

One of the best analyses we've seen on this latter point is [illegible] in an article currently appearing in the Saturday Evening Post. Author [illegible] Stewart Alsop, distin- [illegible]

of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Alsop reveals that Dulles and Bissell not only briefed the new administration on the top-secret Cuban plans, but "sold the White House staff, as well." To a man, all of the old professionals in the CIA and military who carried over when the new administration took power, urged that the Cuban invasion be given a try. It is not surprising, Alsop believes, that a new president should follow the recommendations of these professionals, even when some of his own appointees, Secretary of State Rusk, for one, were urging that the project be abandoned.

The Post writer also reveals that the President went against his own instincts in approving the project. Kennedy was never really sold on its chances for success, and though he has later accepted full responsibility for the failure as a President must do, he was critical of the project from the first moment he learned of it.

Other lessons from hindsight which Alsop points up are these:

(1) If a vital change is made in a plan for a major operation like this, then the whole plan must be re-examined from start to finish with a cold and fishy eye. The decision not to use U. S. forces in the invasion just before the operation was mounted tied our hands and diminished possibilities for the hoped for Cuban uprising. Alsop's point is that having made the decision [illegible]